

A Critical Examination of Astrology

Astrology is a form of divination based on the observation of stars, planets and the sun. A lot of ancient civilizations had some form of astrology. The Mayans, the Aztec, the Greeks, the Hindus, the Chinese, the Egyptians and many others, all have some form of astrology, but none of their systems agree with one another. For an example, Aztec and Mayan astrology is based on a 260 day period whereas Egyptian is based on a 364 day period plus the extra day for a leap year. Also, the Aztec civilization was notorious for their human sacrifices and the timing of these rituals was determined through this form of divination; however, human sacrifices were not required out of most other systems and civilizations such as the Chinese or Hindus. If the various systems of astrology are indeed compatible with one another, and that they are valid forms of divination, then why is it that these ancient civilizations not only have different forms of astrology but also radically different rituals based on it such as the practice, or absence of, human sacrifices? Also, if you look at the Chinese system of astrology versus modern Western astrology, you'll notice that the former is based on a lunar calendar in which there's a different animal of the zodiac for each year. For an example, anyone born on February 7th, 2008 to January 25th, 2009 is considered a Rat person (Irked? Just take your complaints to the guy who invented this system.) The Western system, loosely based on Hellenistic astrology, is what we see in American horoscopes that are available in newspapers and websites, one zodiac animal for each month of a year. For an example, anyone born from the 21st of March to the 19th of April is an Aries. I bring up this point to ask the proponents of astrology a simple question. Which system should I follow? Why should I follow Western horoscopes, which conflict with one another so often that one has to wonder why it is still popular at all, rather than the Chinese system?

Ancient astrology, particularly early European models such as Greek or Roman, is usually based on archaic concepts such as the geocentric model of the

universe, or that the stars are on some kind of a crystal sphere, or that the stars are just specks in the sky and not suns like ours. Astrology is claimed to be a valid form of divination that can be used to accurately predict someone's future, among other things, but yet it took thousands, and perhaps even tens of thousands of years, for mankind to discover that the heavenly bodies do not revolve around us. Not only that, Uranus was discovered in the late 1700s, Neptune in the early 1800s and Pluto in the beginning of the 20th century (although it's now considered a dwarf planet) and to my knowledge, most systems of ancient astrology that based their calculations on the planets never took these heavenly bodies into account until after they were discovered. Now, since most promoters of astrology see it as a science, which means that their knowledge improves with more discoveries and whatnot, it may appear to them that I'm beating around the bush or at the least attacking straw men. So, lets move on.

To test whether or not horoscopes are accurate predictions of someone's life, perform this simple experiment. Provide a list of horoscopes, without the zodiac signs and from the same source, to an individual or an audience, who has provided you with the date of their birth and their zodiac sign, and ask them which prediction matches them the most.

Another way to examine the validity of astrology is to compare some horoscopes, for a certain day from different sources for the same astrological sign, in a short report. Here are my findings, from December 19th, 2010:

From Yahoo's Shine for Aries on December 19th, 2010:
<http://shine.yahoo.com/astrology/aries/daily-overview/>

Keep all communication short but sweet today -- that's how you can guarantee that people get the most important bits first. Save the idle chatter for some other day -- you need to get down to business!

From www.horoscope.com. For Aries on December 19th, 2010:

Give it a rest today, Aries. Recharge your batteries. Stick close to home and take a load off your feet. Convince someone to give you a massage, or better yet, go to a professional. You deserve a break. Once you're restored, consider all the ramifications of whatever actions you take before you start. Plan your moves carefully. Be strong and decisive not rash and frantic.

From MSN's horoscopes. For Aries on December 19th, 2010:

Give it a rest today, Aries. Recharge your batteries. Stick close to home and take a load off your feet. Convince someone to give you a massage, or better yet, go to a professional. You deserve a break. Once you're restored, consider all the ramifications of whatever actions you take before you start. Plan your moves carefully. Be strong and decisive not rash and frantic.

From www.dailyhoroscopes.com. For Aries on December 19th, 2010:

Children, lovers and other people, or the things that are dear to your heart, are accented at this period in your life. Knowing that you are appreciated and esteemed for your gifts and talents is a powerful need. Assuming risks can bring you big rewards. You may find that someone older stifles your progress and new ideas and insights could be slow in coming. Someone may oppose you and frustrate your sense of independence. You may feel thwarted in a relationship--be it romantic, a friendship or job related. Conditions may cause you to rethink some things, reorganize and be more frugal. You are the first to help a neighbor this

evening. If the problem is electrical or plumbing you might loan them a flashlight or give them water instead.

From www.latimes.com. For Aries on December 19th, 2010:

True security comes in knowing that you can take care of yourself. Avoid anyone who attempts to tamper with your inner belief in yourself.

The only two horoscopes that match up are MSN.com and horoscope.com. However, it's word for word and one might conclude that it's from the same soothsayer, or group of astrologers. Still, there's a lot of inconsistency between multiple horoscopes for the same date and the same zodiac, not to mention that some of these horoscopes sound like catch-alls, meaning that they can apply to anyone at any time.

If astrology really is an established science, why are there radically mixed results? There are a couple of counterarguments from the astrologers against this question. "Oh, well scientists come up with different results as well." Yeah, but they're usually minute and they don't jump the gun like these astrologers. Let me give you an example. When an experienced astronomer, with or without credentials, looks through a small, portable telescope to see a star in the night sky, he or she will assume that it might be a sun, but also knows that it is foolish to state, "It is a bright, stationary object in the sky. Therefore, it must be a star". Someone who is familiar with the basics of astronomy will know that there are many bright objects in the sky such as novas, other galaxies and whatnot and so that particular object in the night sky might be any one of those things.

Some astrologers make the argument that their science is similar to the practices of doctors. "Why do people go to different doctors or psychiatrists for a

second opinion? Astrology is the same thing.” There’s a problem with this counterargument. First, you go to get a second opinion to make sure that you really have a particular ailment, maybe the first doctor says that you have cancer or tuberculosis and in those instances most people would want a second opinion. Also, doctors have varying experience levels and specialities, such as gastrologists or psychiatrists. In the case of astrology, however, we see predictions, made for different groups of people, each and every day that are based on observations of the cosmos rather than the people themselves. How any astrologer can claim that their “science” is on par with medical practitioners is beyond me. Not only that, you have to ignore those conflicting predictions.

Secondly, if you believe that these different predictions are the same thing as, “Getting a second opinion from the doc,” then we must assume that both fields are completely incompetent in predicting or determining anything. If I were to go to a doctor for a diagnosis and I get, “Flu” but then to another doctor and then get, “Cancer” and then to another and get, “heartburn” and then to the last one and get “Healthy as a horse” I have to not only seriously question and doubt the entire profession but also the whole field of medical science, or at least whoever is in charge of giving those clowns degrees or licenses in the first place. The same goes for astrology. Just look at the above predictions. “Give it a rest today” versus, “You need to get down to business!”, or “You are the first to help a neighbor this evening...loan them a flashlight or give them water instead”. The prediction from www.horoscope.com does not contain the warning from www.latimes.com about avoiding, “anyone who attempts tamper with your inner belief about yourself”. Fortunately, for the rest of us, doctors are not astrologers and medical science is not related in anyway to astrology.

Other astrologers might argue that the position of the astrologer, such as one in China or America, will affect the predictions drastically and therefore, the results would be different. Along with that, there are different schools for astrology so; it is given that two horoscopes from two different sources are not

the same. There are two problems for this defense. First, we're talking about the position of an astrologer on a single planet and so if the results are this skewed due to the position of someone on a planet, which is miniscule on an astronomical scale, one has to question the accuracy of the entire field of astrology. Secondly, this begs the question as to where would be the correct location to make horoscopes. Is it in Egypt? Mesoamerica? India? Europe? Why there and not here or there? The same can be said of the school that an astrologer is from. Which school and why? Why should we trust the Chinese system of astrology and not that of the Vedic or Greek systems, or vice versa?

From my research and reports, I can conclude, with a considerable level of confidence, that there is nothing of value to horoscopes or astrology. To base one's life on these systems is akin to allowing a blind man to be your personal chauffeur.

Resources used for this essay:

<http://nineplanets.org/nineplanets.html#toc>

<http://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/planetary/planetfact.html>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astrology>

<http://www.astro.com/>

<http://www.astrology.com/>

<http://www.mysticscripts.com/astrology/aztec-astrology/>

<http://www.mysticscripts.com/astrology/egyptian-astrology/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egyptian_astrology

<http://www.onlinechineseastrology.com/>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neptune>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uranus>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pluto>

<http://www.bobmarksastrologer.com/skeptics.htm>

<http://www.astrosociety.org/education/astro/act3/astrology3.html#defense>

<http://daphne.palomar.edu/jgilardi/astrology%20debunk.htm>

<http://www.skeptdic.com/barnum.html>

<http://www.skeptdic.com/astrolgy.html>